



Supplemental media links prepared for a talk at
the Diriyah Arts Futures Museum of Saudi Arabia on December 10, 2024

ARTIST STATEMENT

I break things and play with the pieces; I realize this act is an historically nihilistic gesture, but that is not my interest: *the flash of recognition—faces, words, stories, spaces—is my focus*. My work challenges understanding the computer as only an instrument of valorization, seduction, or assault. The reason I began systematically corrupting and damaging media in 1990 was to create a critical expression by rupturing the illusionistic perfection of technical images, but my intentions are irrelevant to my semiotic approach: the audience will see what their hopes and fears, education, and desires taught/allow them to see. The immanent give-and-take between those quotations the audience recognizes, what's called "intertext," and what's produced using the medium, the "text," connects glitches to the visionary tradition by crafting a dramatic art from perception itself—the shapes and patterns of this iconography are performers whose actions can neither be anticipated nor described in advance, but arise directly from digital technology—an unknown adventure in an unknowable space. Yet I'm not interested in technological determinism, formalist exploration, nor anything arbitrary and capricious: I'm interested in articulating basic human emotions—ecstasy, sensuality, fascination—via glitches that encourage viewers to find poetic meaning in their everyday life.

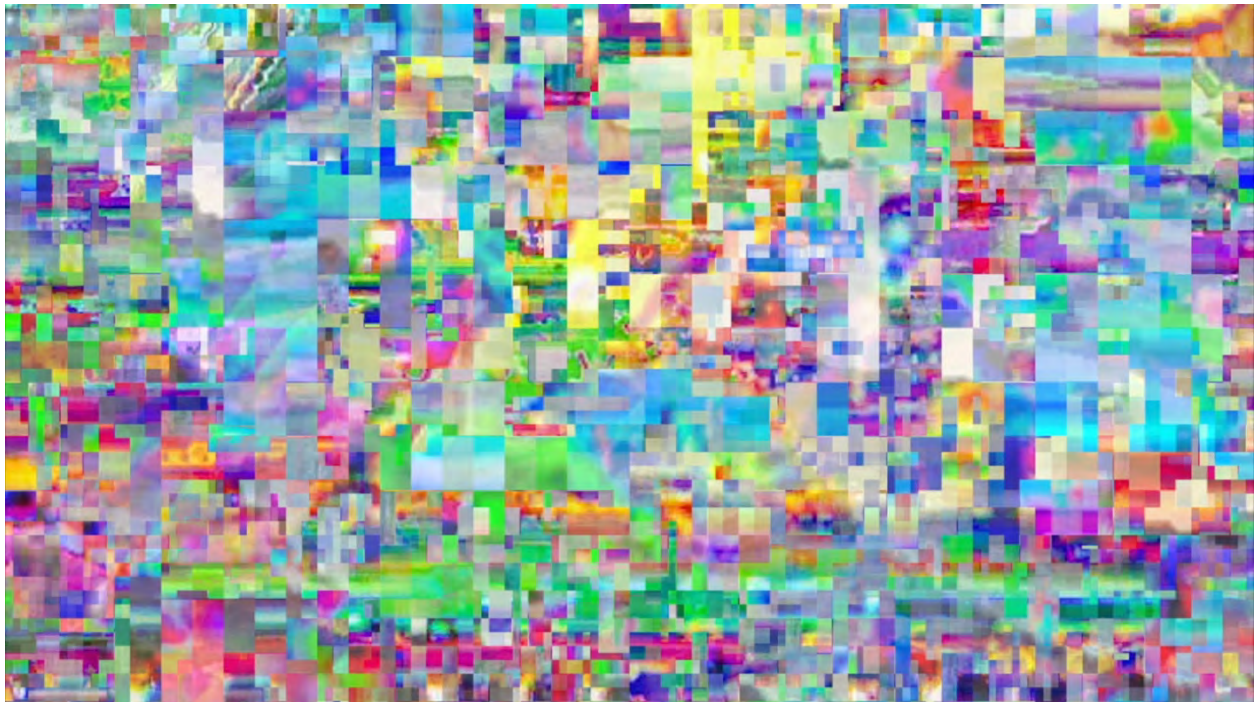
CAREER NARRATIVE

Michael Betancourt is a distinguished Cuban-American (Latinx) critical theorist and research artist known for his pioneering work in the fields of digital capitalism, motion graphics, and Glitch Art. He has been a member of the board for the *Art of Light Organization* since its founding in 2021. Author of more than thirty books that explore how Modernist heuristics and their Post-Modern aftermath continue to shape Contemporary digital capitalism, he combines critical theory, the digital humanities, and historical cinema studies to establish an interdisciplinary dialogue between studio praxis, media studies, and Contemporary art. This research has been translated into nine languages (Chinese, French, German, Greek, Italian, Japanese, Persian, Portuguese, and Spanish).

He received a Ph.D. in Interdisciplinary Studies focused on the intersection of theory and practice in Film and Art from the University of Miami in 2002; he is currently a Professor of Motion Media Design at the Savannah College of Art and Design in Savannah, Georgia teaching graduate/undergraduate courses in theory/practice. Since starting his present position in 2009, he was instrumental in building the Motion Media Design program into the number 1 ranked motion graphics program in the world (*The Rookies*, 2016–2021).

His studio practice began working with digital errors and breakdowns, what is now called "Glitch Art," in 1990 when the NewTek *Video Toaster* he was using to color shift a video malfunctioned and output a series of flickering and shifting abstract patterns instead of what he was expecting. He welcomed this discovery; he had looked for ways to induce the kinds of generative imagery these glitches created since writing his first computer animation programs on an Apple II in 1979. His experimental photographs, created purely in the darkroom during the late 1980s, provided a foundation for handling the uncontrolled aspects of both moving and static digital glitches during the 1990s; however, the aesthetic embrace of visual glitches lagged several years behind their use in electronic music, leading him to conceive of glitched footage as simply one more category of material to manipulate and combine with more traditional imagery. His pioneering work with glitching digital video anticipated contemporary processes and techniques, such as "datamoshing" and "pixelsorting," before these methods became codified and familiar. Inducing errors and exploiting systemic faults has remained a source of imagery in his movies and statics for expressing a critique of media culture.

He has consistently exploited the inherent instabilities in digital systems to compose visually seductive challenges to their normative operations. His recent movies exploit the dynamic range of contemporary digital cameras that far exceed what traditional film can detect, integrating those results with glitch processes. The fusion of the glitched/unglitched has remained a feature of his work throughout his career, guided by his critical publications addressing digital capitalism and perceptual semiotics.

Instaglitches (2021)

preview: <https://vimeo.com/630156096>
<https://vimeo.com/780813207> (documentation of installation)

6:30 minutes, HD (1920x1080)

Instaglitch images: <https://www.michaelbetancourt.com/art/instaglitch/index.html>

Description:

This movie animates a series of 2,600 still images created by glitching the Instagram application between 2015 and 2021. It is a series of 1 second lap dissolves between static Instaglitch images, glitched. These stills were made by exploiting the aberrant and unheimlich results of image handling and processing by the Instagram photosharing app—it derived novel examples of Glitch Art from the faults inherent to the iPhone system. This project uses these inconsistencies as a mechanism for aesthetic creation that provides evidence for the fantasy of control that the “walled garden” of apps create. The development of the Instaglitch offers a counter to this hegemonic ideology via a studio practice that exploits the Instagram app’s very limited ‘degrees of freedom’ without altering the app itself or employing less restrictive software. These works are examples of how repeated processing and ‘filtering’ of the same image within the same system—a feedback loop—magnifies the instabilities inherent in its operations. The 2,600 works in this series of static images demonstrates programmatic failures that are masked by its normal use, but are systemic instabilities—their identification allowed me to generate works by manipulating their impacts on a blank (white) image.

Awarded "Best of Show" at Digital Graffiti 2022 at Alys Beach, FL (May 13-14, 2022).

Awarded “Best Fearless Short” at Make Art Not Fear, Porto, Portugal (October 1, 2022).

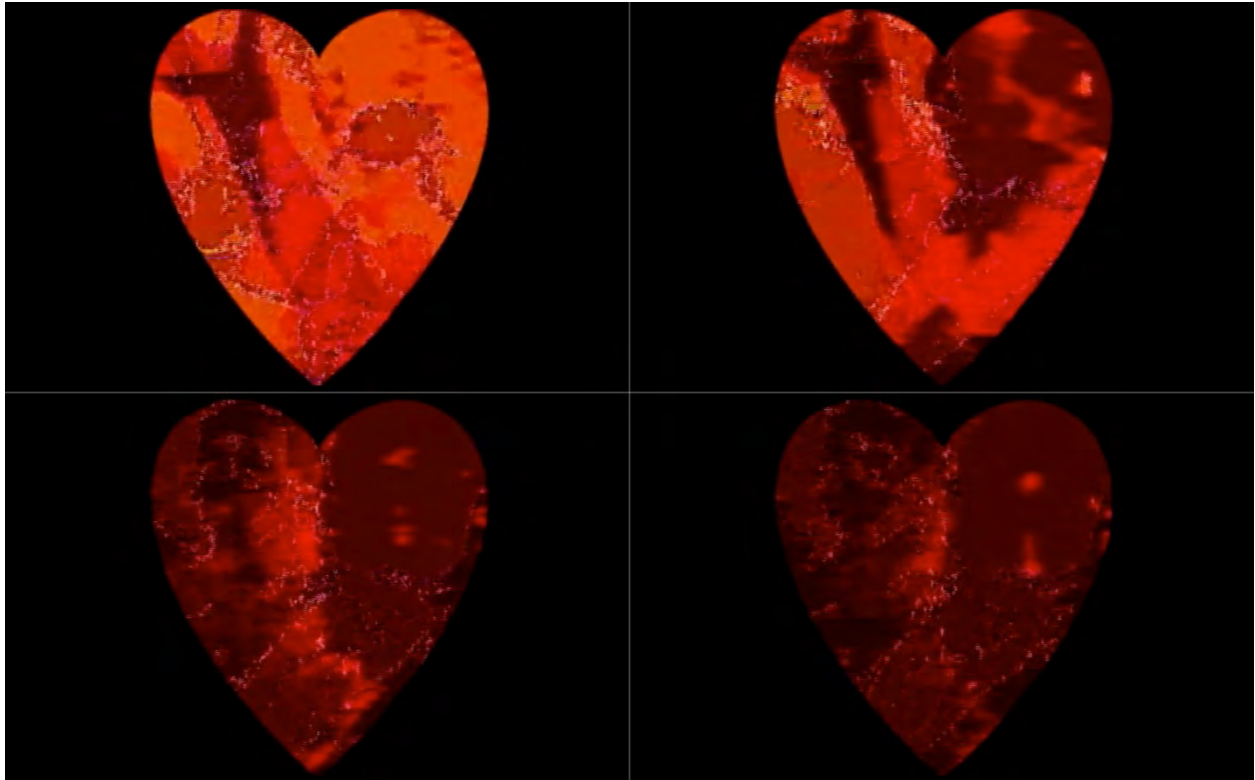
malfunction (2000)

preview: <https://vimeo.com/107781109>

1:00 minute, silent SD/DV (640x480)

Description:

This early glitch movie creates a “datamosh” by using a corrupt AVI video codex to generate a series of abstract and kinetic patterns. The glitches produced by a mismatch between the original compressed video file and the corrupted video codex used to render it for a human audience generated a mass of moving, brightly colored blocks that would pause periodically. To preserve this novel rendering, the file was transcoded from the ‘incorrect’ (broken) video codex, recompressing to make a new file that would retain the abstract appearance. The pauses create discrete passages of rhythmic movement that articulate a series of “shots” despite the lack of visible editing. This indistinction of shots (and frames) happens because the digital video is a generative product; if these separations cannot be identified in decoding the file, the accessible image data smears as it moves, demonstrating the artifice and contingency of the video and its composition from frames.

Illumination (2001)

preview: <https://vimeo.com/13108795>

1:30 minutes, stereo SD/DV (640x480)

Description:

“Sergei Eisenstein was the first to study extensively the relation of image (in film) and language. A pioneer in the creation of the 'montage theory,' he also engaged in research in Chinese characters and analyzed the ideographic elements in detail; his theory of montage, in fact, developed out of this work. As an example (though not necessarily one of Eisenstein's), the combination of the word SUN and the word MOON makes the word ILLUMINATION.”
—Takahiko Iimura, “Visuality in the Structure of the Japanese Language”

Originally produced for Squeaky Wheel’s annual *Valentine’s Day* exhibition, where it screened.

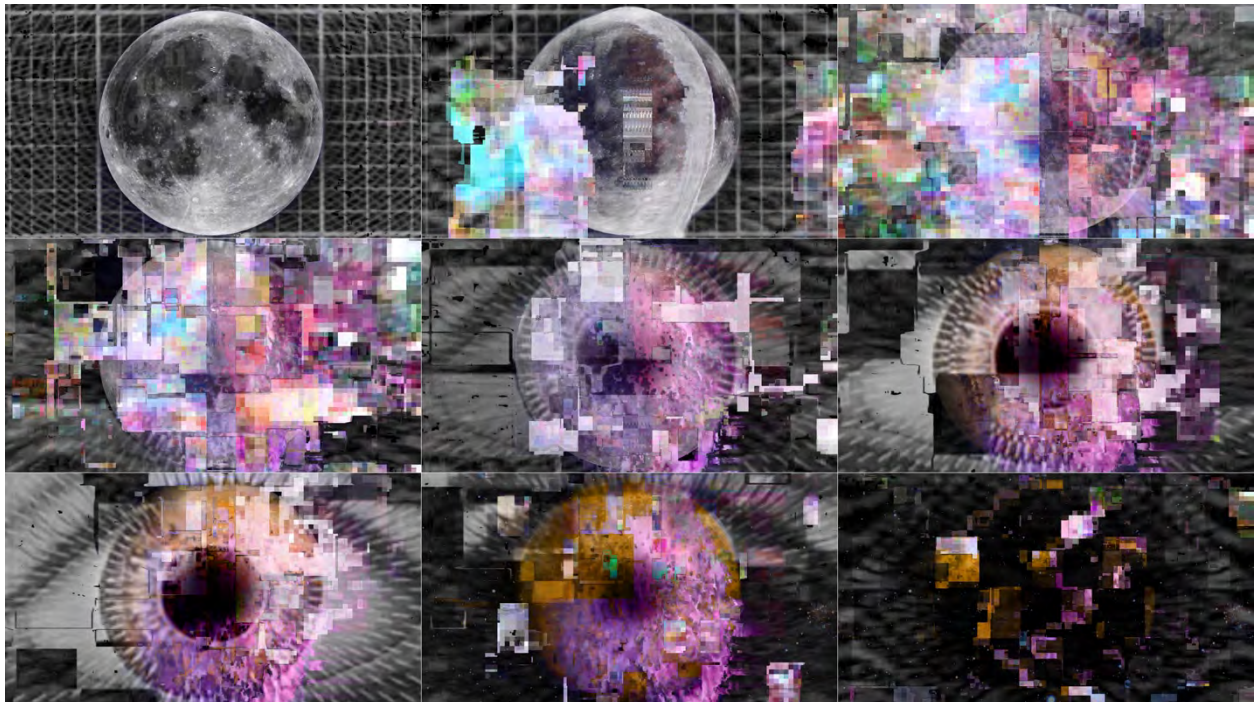
The Kodak Moment (2013)

preview: <https://vimeo.com/73802758>

2:00 minutes, stereo HD (1920x1080 30p)
music by Frédéric Chopin, *Nocturne in G Major*
performed by Mary Hallock-Greenewalt

Description:

The silent film actress Mae Murray, known as the “girl with bee-stung lips,” appears in fancy dress, pouting and flirting with the audience. Hers is an archetypal image of white feminine beauty from the start of the twentieth century, a form that was already old when the source film was shot in 1922, here glitched and fragmented—yet remaining coherently recognizable throughout this movie. The music is from a vintage 1920 recording of inventor, visual music pioneer, and symphony piano soloist Mary Hallock-Greenewalt playing Chopin’s *Nocturne in G Major*.

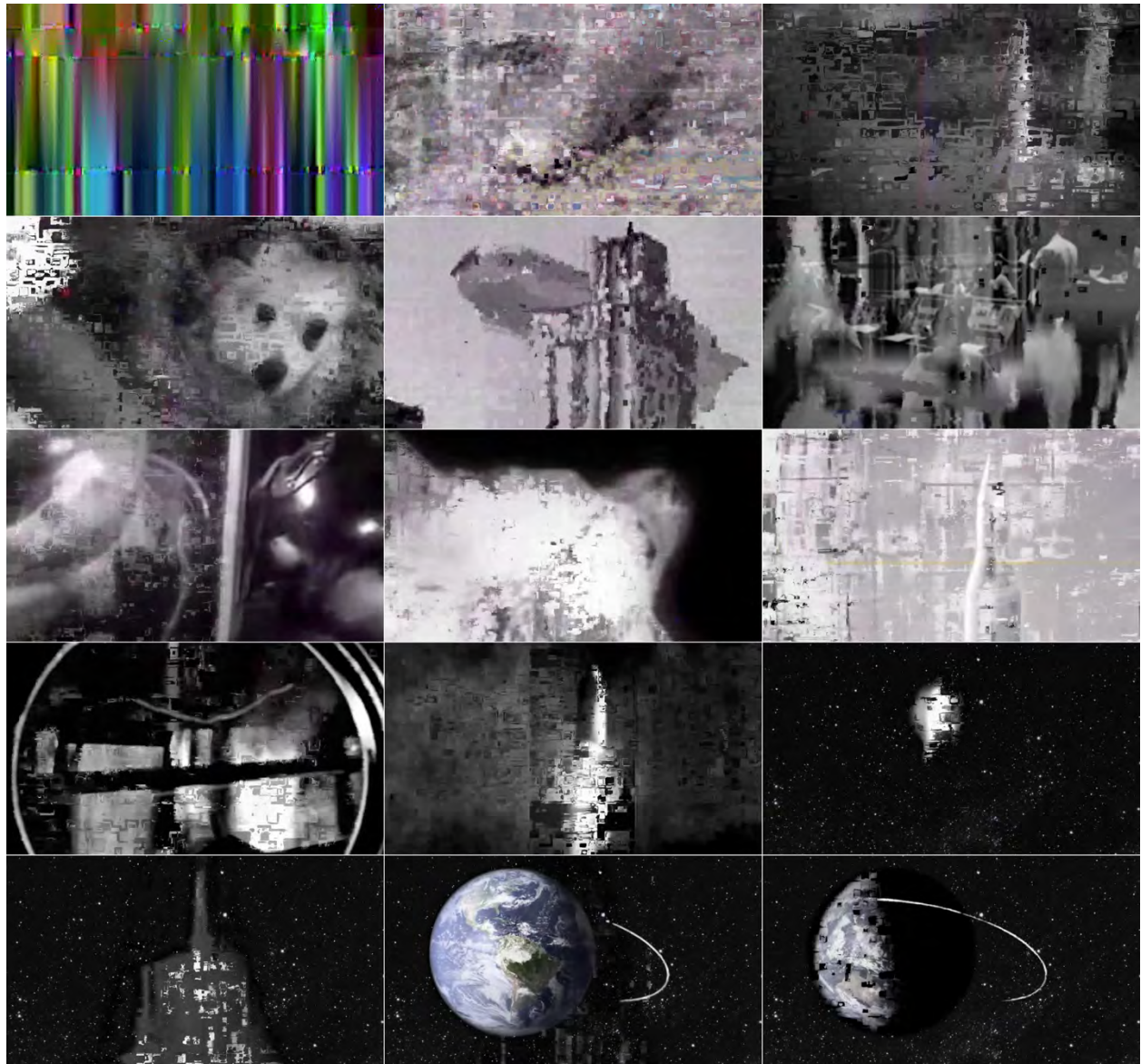
the Dark Rift (2014)

preview: <https://vimeo.com/88156435>

2:00 min, stereo HD (1920x1080)
music by Dennis H. Miller

Description:

the Dark Rift is a 2 minute movie produced from a mixture of archival footage and a NASA video of the Moon rotating, synchronized with music by composer Dennis H. Miller, who also produces visual music animations. The title for this movie is a reference to Mayan mythology. They believed the “Dark Rift,” a group of interstellar dust clouds that divide the bright band of the Milky Way galaxy lengthwise, and whose alignment with the Sun marks the winter solstice on Earth, was the road to the underworld. Moon imagery demonstrates this fantasy::reality dynamic throughout my work. The multiple windows and glitches appearing throughout this movie appear not as interruptions, but as shifts in resolution. It is only at the end when an astronomical photograph of the Dark Rift begins to appear ‘behind’ the Moon that these windows become physically present as layers of image—it is through the shifting relationship they have to the black areas on screen that they become physical. This change in perception is a shift between abstraction (the windows as glitched parts of the image) and realism (layers lying in front of a more distant background).

The Dogs of Space (2015)

preview: <https://vimeo.com/134238787>

3:00 minutes, stereo HD (1920x1080)

Description:

This narrative fuses documentary, scientific, fictional and abstract glitch footage into a composite story, dramatizing the launch of two Soviet space dogs, Belka and Strelka, into orbit. It explores glitch and realism, where the two are held in tension against each other to change the meaning of concepts such as “Heavens and Earth” to provide a visionary subtext to scientific exploration. The immanent identification provided by archival material is essential. By using twentieth century scientific and public domain footage, these explicit quotations enable a synthesis, drawing attention to my reuse. Glitching functions syntactically in this fusion; linking shot-quotations while at the same time providing inflection that changes the imagery’s meaning separately from issues of montage or sequence.

Going Somewhere (2015–2017)

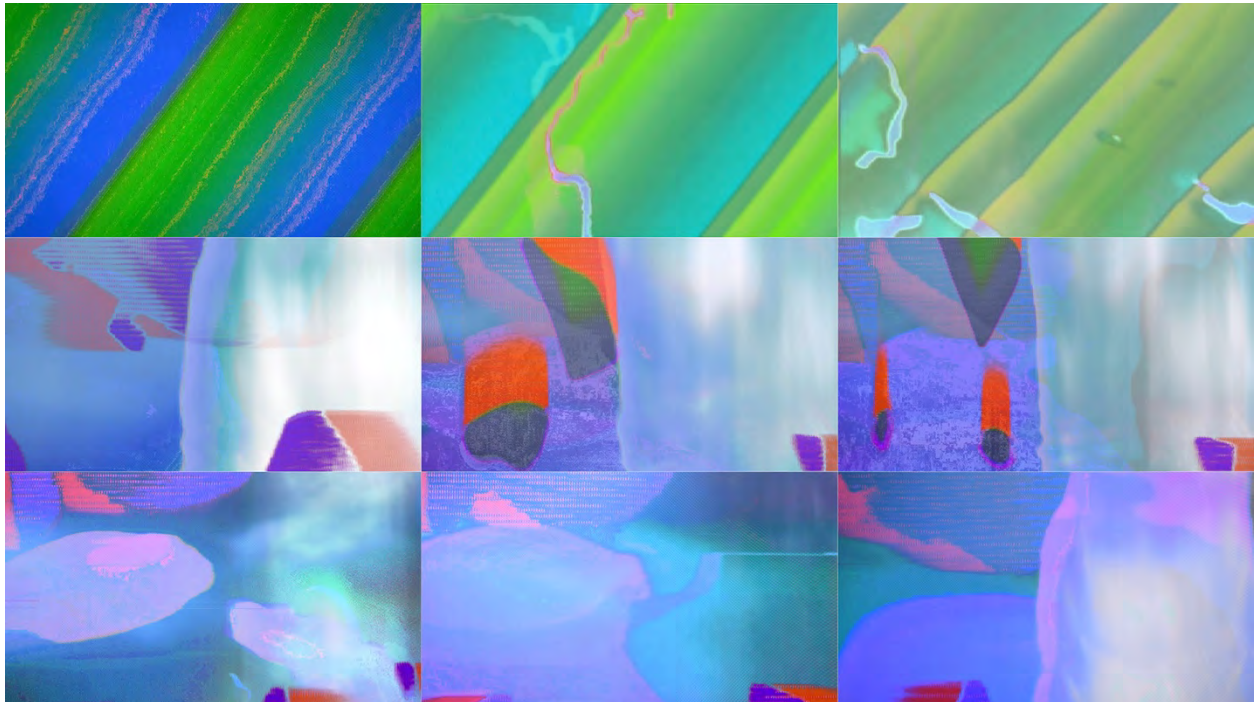
preview: <https://vimeo.com/album/4005535>

7:00 minutes per episode, stereo HD (1920x1080)

Description:

“*Going Somewhere* is frequently breathtakingly beautiful.... In Betancourt’s hands, datamoshing becomes a form of cultural resistance. Instead of utilizing the smooth, illusionistic motion of digital cinema which you would typically see in a commercial movie theater, he deliberately pulls apart the codes and exploits its errors to deconstruct the movies and show us how they do their tricks. He pulls apart the narrative tropes of Sci Fi at the same time that he literally pulls apart the pictures, pixel by pixel, creating a radically open form which resists the hypnotic myth-making of Hollywood.” — David Finkelstein

“The glitch creates abrupt insertions and interferences, with intrusive fragments of images that seem out of place or come from other moments, earlier or later, belonging to the same narrative. Through the failure, whether fortuitous or induced, the trick is exposed; we still perceive movement, but we understand that it is only real in our mind.” — José Manuel García Perera

Niagara (2024)

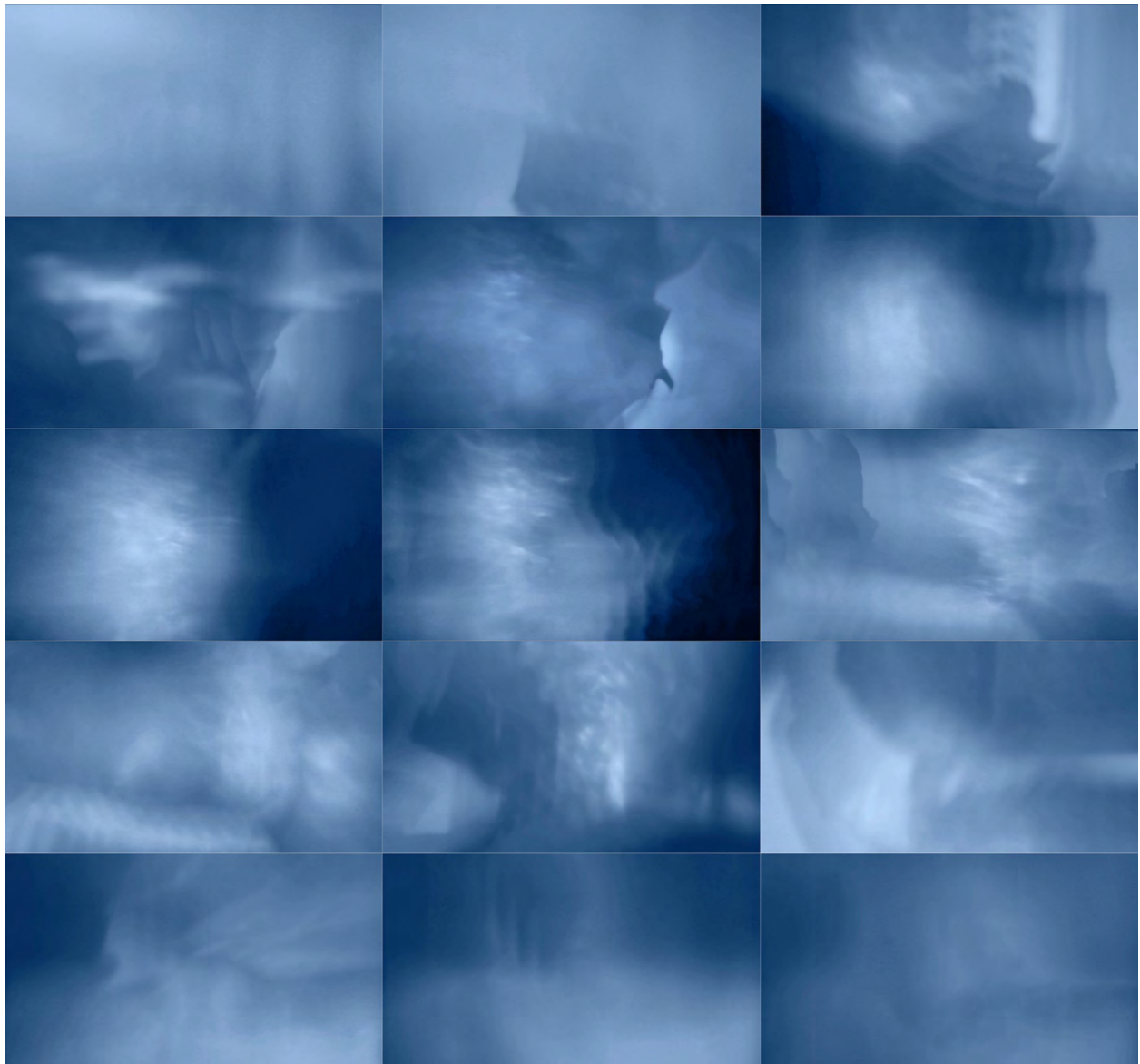
preview: <https://vimeo.com/939568470/d5c92f1fba>

2:10 minutes, stereo HD (1920x1080 30p)

music by Radical Elsewhere, "Machines on the Beach" (from the album *The Crack in the Dark*)
produced while Artist in Residence, Institute for Electronic Arts, Alfred University, Alfred, NY

Description:

Niagara pays homage to the Hudson River School landscape painting of the same title: swirling colors and shapes evoke the grandeur of its namesake American waterfall. Produced while Artist in Residence at the Institute for Electronic Arts at Alfred University, and made using Lumia, a Sandin Image Processor, and a BPMC HDK-01 digital glitch processor, the imagery evokes the flows and turbulence of falling water in motion. The continuous stream of the digital-electronic signal becomes a mirror for the flow of water and passage of light (Lumia) that is both the vehicle of presentation and the initial subject matter being transformed.

Angular Momentum (2019)

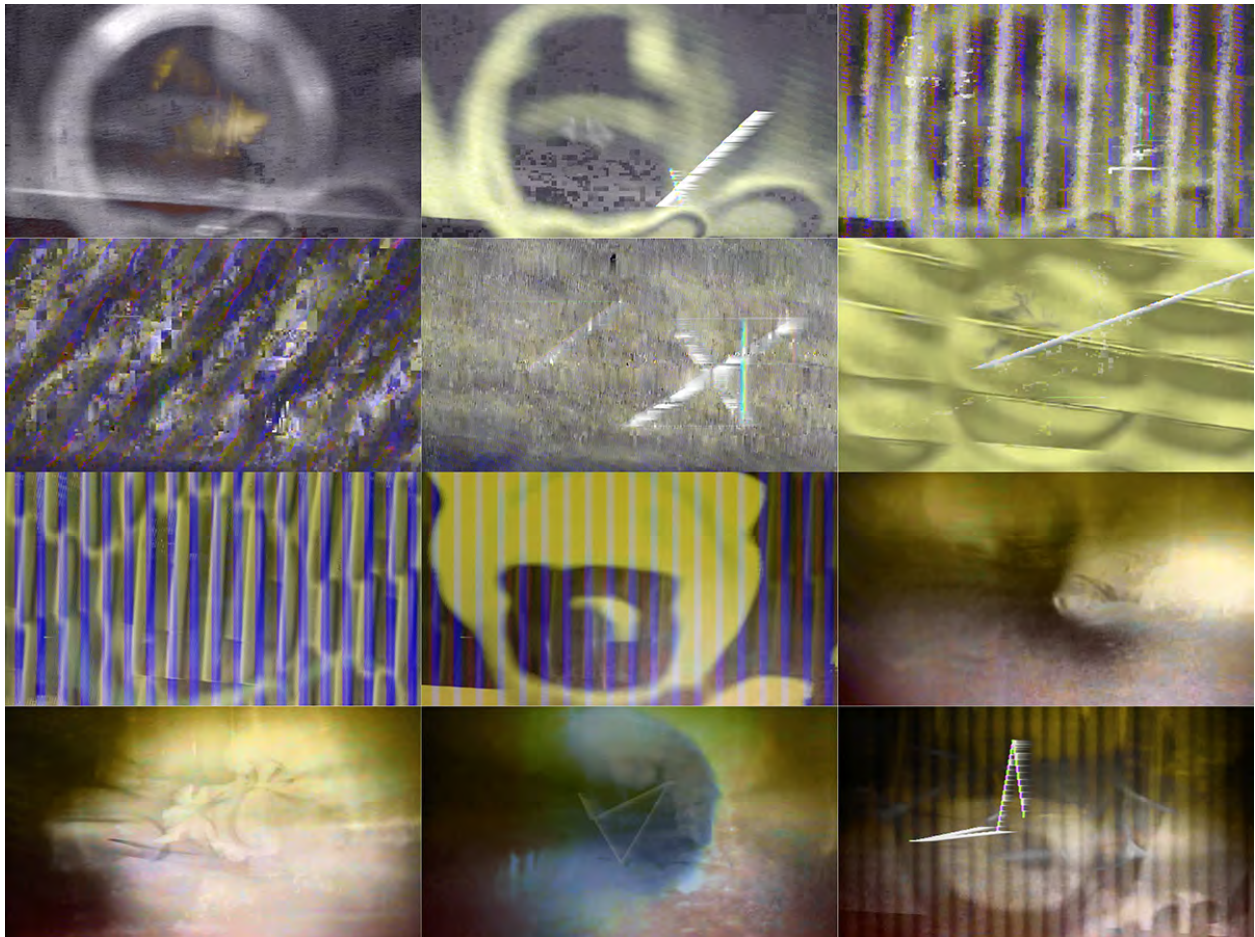
preview: <https://vimeo.com/343434467>

5:00 minutes, stereo HD (1920x1080 60p)

Description:

Cyanotype video. Centrifugal force pushing against the figure-ground distinction. An agglomeration of abstract light-shadow play, set in motion to evoke the transcendental, sublime experience created through a fusion of traditional, analogue in-camera photographic techniques with digital animation and compositing.

This movie was created primarily with in-camera techniques, supplemented with minimal digital compositing to join the various shots together. Drawing on the visionary tradition of Lumia, it transposes traditional optical approaches to digital imaging.

Seeing/Counting (2022)

preview: <https://vimeo.com/724887658/398b565e95>

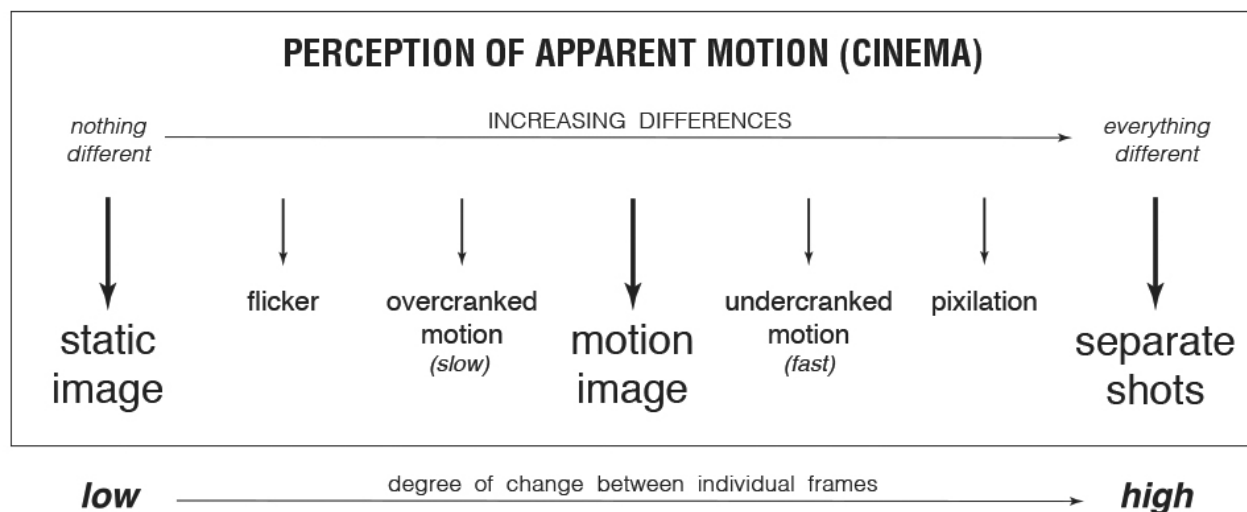
4:30 minutes, stereo HD (1920x1080 30p)

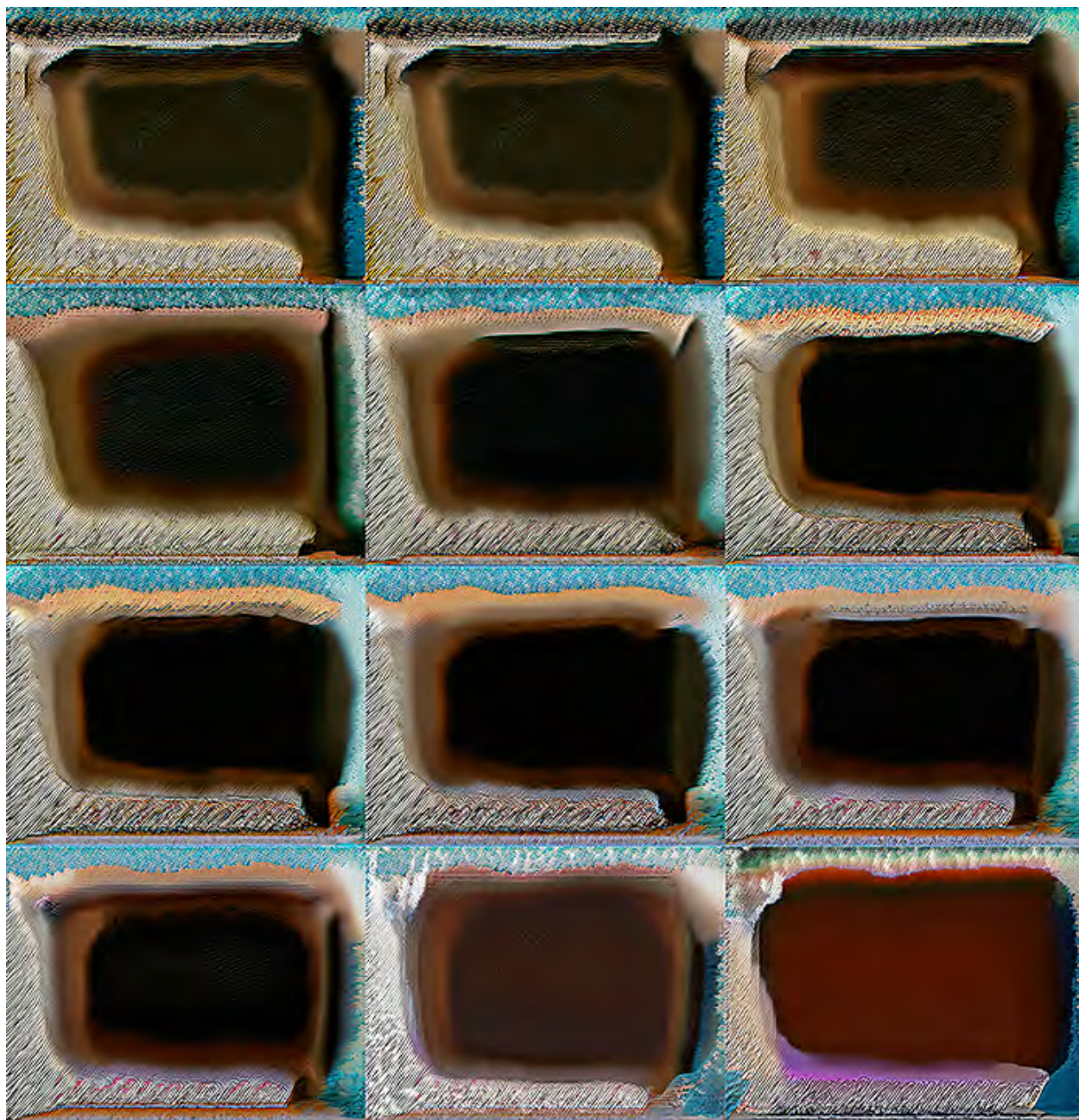
Description:

Seeing / Counting connects my very first experiments with digital animation to my most recent experimental work produced in the pitch darkness of the studio: animations produced on an Apple][computer using the “Low Rez Animator” program I wrote in 1981; analogue electronic video synthesis, processing, and feedback; optical light patterns (Lumia) shot at ISO 51,200; and Glitch Art techniques (datamoshing and databending). These four motifs were fused by digital compositing and an HD projection/rephotography feedback loop that creates a dialogue between the immediacy of live video mixing and the reflective assembly of post-production. This contrast of means and ends is a summa of my various and sundry visual interests in abstract kinetic imagery from the past forty years, contrasting and juxtaposing what are incompatible and disparate techniques, technologies, and iconographies.

Glitching AImages reveals how the “creativity” of AImages emerges not from the AI system itself, but from the viewer's capacity to find meaning in unexpected visual representations. The debate over AI creativity reveals the centrality of human cultural and ideological frameworks used to evaluate art. The technology itself remains unconscious, unable to understand its own productions, while humans transform seemingly random distortions into meaningful artistic expressions through the power of interpretation, ultimately demonstrating that creativity is a deeply human act of perception and meaning-making independent of the nonsemic creations of automation.

The animation of these AImages exploits the nature of motion perception in technical media:



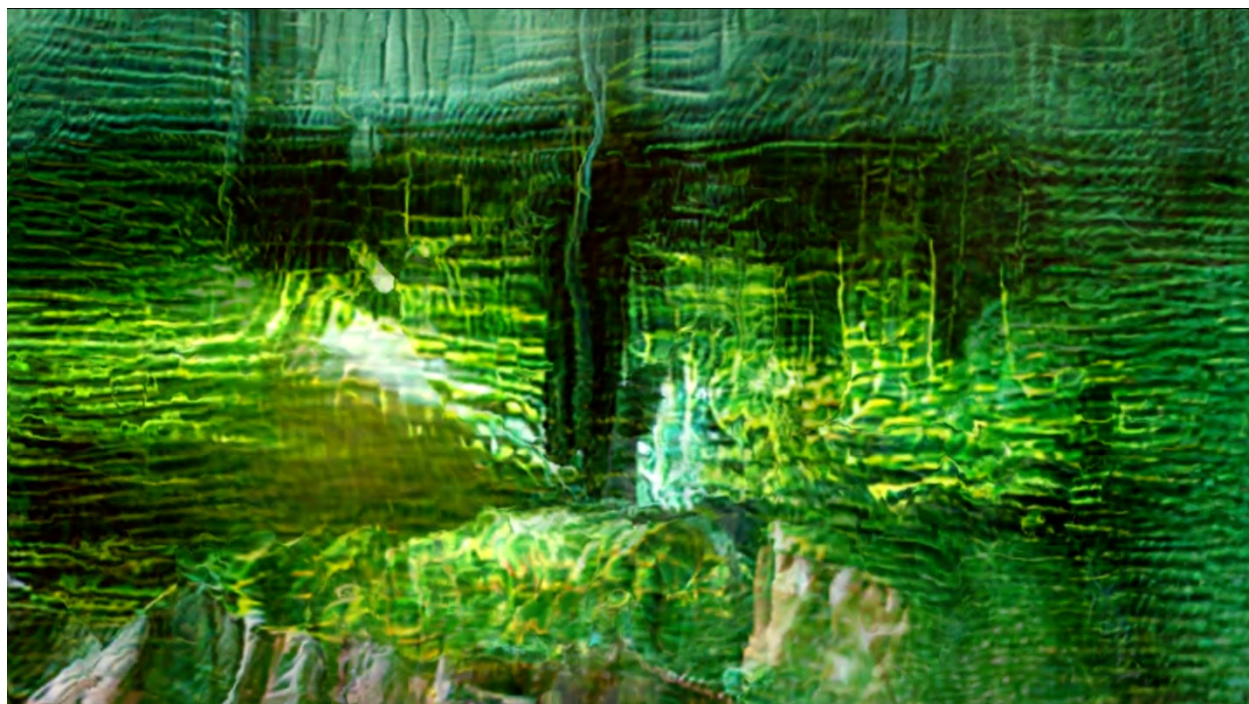
AI Movement (2023)

preview: <https://vimeo.com/1010074224>

2:01.5 minutes, stereo HD (1920x1080 30p)

Description:

This movie is an experiment in single frame animation using AImaglitches generated with *Easy Diffusion*. These glitches are a product of (LoRA) models interacting to cancel each other's work.

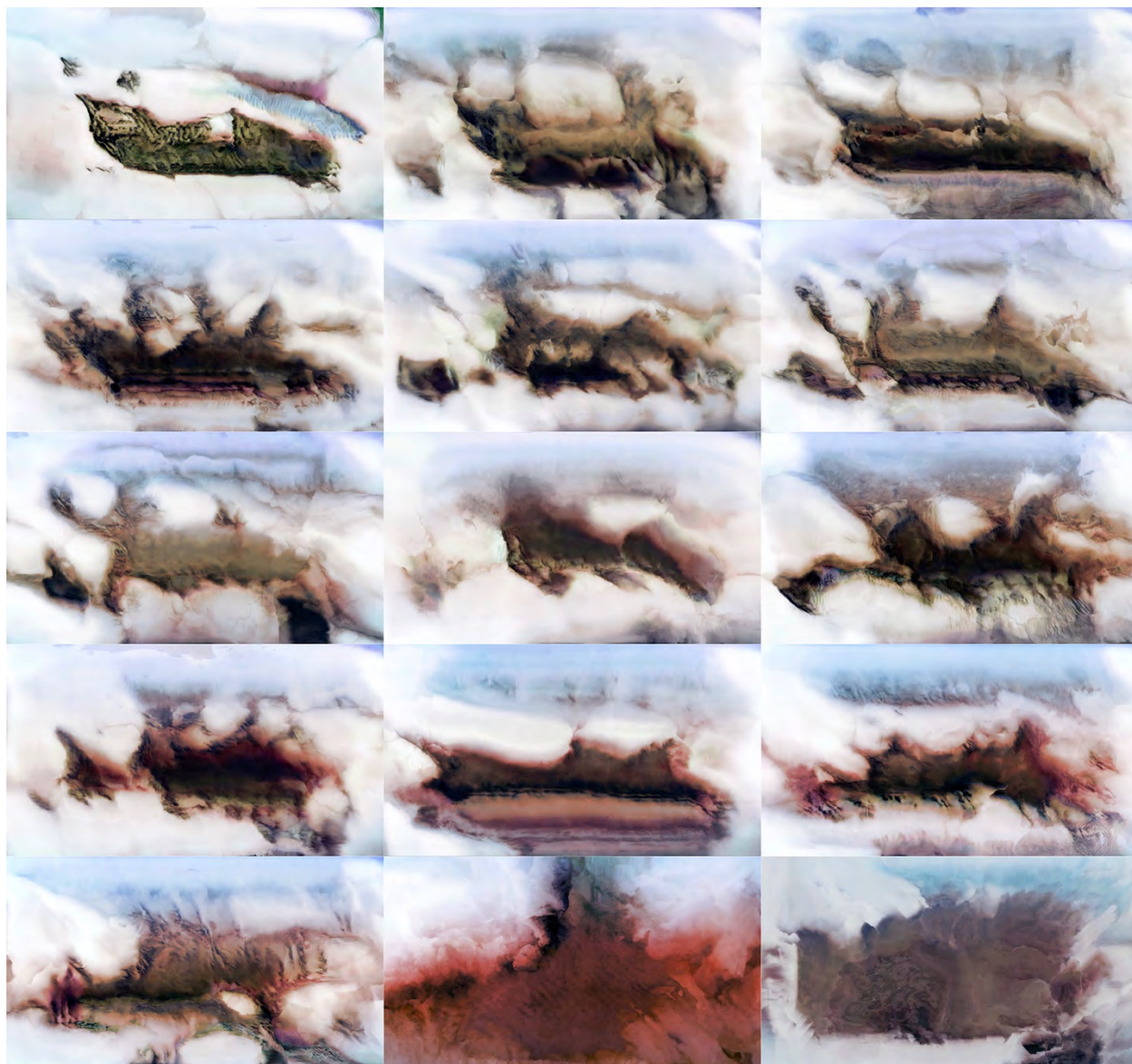
Garden (2024)

preview: <https://vimeo.com/1033883279>

3:00 minutes, stereo HD (1920x1080 30p)

Description:

Garden is an animation of generative glitches produced by AI (LoRA) models in deliberate conflict. Using multiple LoRA models to generate imagery suggesting flowers in a garden, the piece transforms traditional representations of plant life into a fluid, hallucinatory exploration of growth, decay, and metamorphosis. These transformations suggest alternative ways of understanding organic growth, where boundaries between individual organisms become fluid and permeable. Created using layers of translucent animorphs, this movie presents a continuously shifting and converging counterpoint to the accompanying music. It questions how technological mediation can unveil aspects of natural systems invisible to human perception, presenting organic life as dynamic, unpredictable, and fundamentally processual rather than static or documentary.

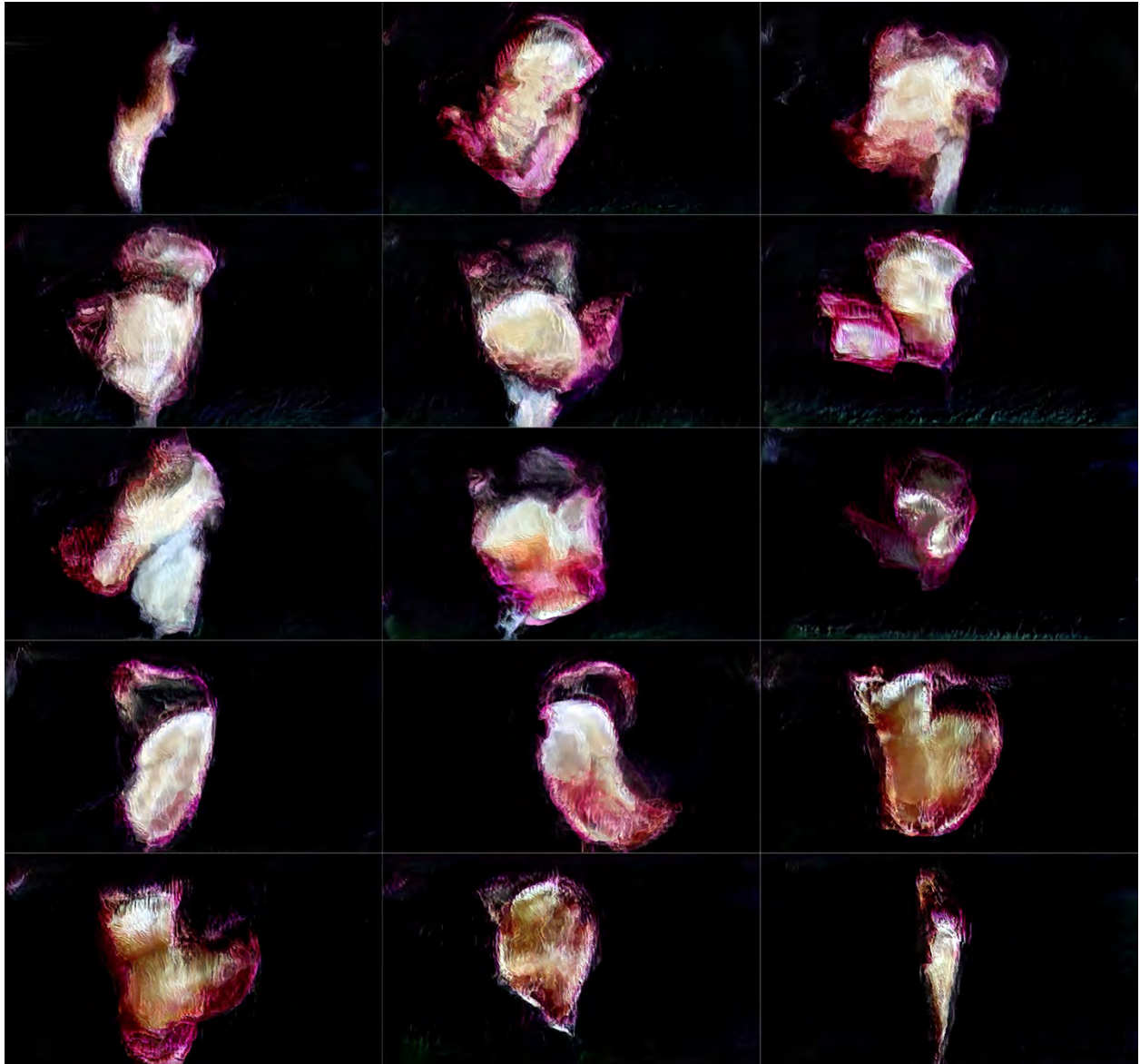
Chaise Longue (Olympia) (2024)

preview: <https://vimeo.com/983087683/50974c2ae7>

2:00 minutes, stereo HD (1920x1080 30p)

Description:

Chaise Longue (Olympia) is an animation of generative glitches made by AI (LoRA) models interacting to cancel each other's work. Made from only 20 aimag glitch keyframes, the resulting animorph flows across the screen. The hallucinatory imagery emergent throughout this movie evokes and takes inspiration from the composition of Édouard Manet's painting *Olympia* (1863).

La Fée Électricité (2024)

preview: <https://vimeo.com/986463987/e04a066596>

2:00 minutes, stereo HD (1920x1080 30p)

Description:

La Fée Électricité (*The Electric Fairy*) is an animation of generative glitches made by AI (LoRA) models interacting to cancel each other's work. Adapted from a brief sequence of a serpentine dance filmed in 1896, this aimaglitch movie is an homage to dancer and choreographer Loïe Fuller.

Mnemonic Fields (2024)

preview: <https://vimeo.com/981584443/227bc23063>

2:00 minutes, stereo HD (1920x1080 30p)

Description:

Mnemonic Fields is an animation of generative glitches made by AI (LoRA) models interacting to cancel each other's work. Each individual aimaglitch serves as a keyframe in an animorph that flows across the screen. This transformative process evokes the continuity of time, organized into discrete moments that begin with the inchoate experiences of childhood. The hallucinatory imagery emergent throughout this movie reflect the viewer's own desires for coherence and comprehension as they confront the world.

PUBLIC COLLECTIONS (IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER)

Anchorage Museum of History and Art (Anchorage, AK)
 Artists Television Access (San Francisco, CA)
 International Museum of Contemporary Art (Florianópolis, Brazil)
 The IotaCenter (Los Angeles, CA)
 Museum of Contemporary Art—North Miami (Miami, FL)
 Museum of Modern Art (New York, NY)
 pdArchive, Charles Library, Temple University (Philadelphia, PA)
 Richter Library, University of Miami (Miami, FL)
 Rose Goldsen Archive of New Media Art (New York, NY)
 Squeaky Wheel Media Cooperative (Buffalo, NY)

EXHIBITIONS & SCREENINGS (SELECTED)

“Glitch: Ontological Exhaustions and System Failures” curated by Verena Voigt, Spazju Kreattiv, Valletta, Malta, March 14–May 4, 2025
 “The Patterned Screen,” M+ Cinema, West Kowloon Cultural District, Hong Kong, China, January 1–March 31, 2023
 8th /Fu:Bar/ Glitch Art Exhibition, Institut Français en Croatie, Zagreb, Croatia, October 28–December 31, 2022
 Anamóphosis International Film Festival, Conservatorio di Lecce, Milan, Italy, May 27, 2022
 Digital Graffiti Festival, “Best of Show” award, Alys Beach, FL, May 13–14, 2022
 Mitte Media Festival, Director’s Lounge, Berlin, Germany, April 5, 2017
 Untitled, Art fair, San Francisco Cinematheque, San Francisco, CA, January 13–15, 2017
 Winter Series, Anthology Film Archives, New York, NY, March 18, 2015
 Contemporary Art Ruhr: Media Art Fair, Director’s Lounge, Essen, Germany, May 30–June 1, 2014
 Ultra Video Lounge—2009 Ultra Music Festival, Miami, FL, March 27–28, 2009
 Late at the Tate, Tate Modern, London, UK, April 4, 2008
 Obliteration and Focus, Bass Museum of Art, Miami Beach, FL, May 4, 2003

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 Serbin, V. A. “Glitch art: критические практики цифровой культуры” [Glitch Art: the Critical Practice of Digital Culture] *Humanitarian Science*, no. 9 (2015) pp. 88–98

GRANTS (SELECTED)

2006 National Endowment for the Arts / Iowa Arts Council, Artist Project Mini-Grant (FY06 – October)
 2005 National Endowment for the Arts / Iowa Arts Council, Artist Project Mini-Grant (FY05 – July)
 2003 Florida Division of Cultural Affairs, Artist Access Grant

RESIDENCY

2024 Institute for Electronic Arts (IEA), Alfred University, Alfred, NY
 2006 University of Nebraska—Omaha, Omaha, NE
 2003 Experimental Television Center, Oswego, NY
 1996 Experimental Television Center, Oswego, NY